

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of the Claims

1-11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) A method of preventing nucleus pulposus in an intradiscal space from extruding through a defect in the annulus fibrosis, the annulus fibrosis having an outer layer and at least one inner layer, ~~comprising~~ said method consisting essentially of the steps of:

inserting no more than one implant through an elongate tubular member into the defect in the annulus fibrosis;

wherein the implant comprises a flexible device having a structure with at least two appendages joined to form an interior angle and an exterior angle, the interior angle being smaller than the exterior angle during insertion through the elongate tubular member, the appendages being made from a shape-memory material;

advancing the flexible device distally beyond the outer layer in the annulus fibrosis;

expanding the appendages of the flexible device by allowing the device to return to a memorized shape substantially larger than the defect in the outer layer of the annulus fibrosis;

wherein the flexible device prevents escape of the nucleus pulposus through the defect;

and

wherein the interior angle between appendages is larger after deployment than during the step of inserting the implant into the defect.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein:
the step of inserting the device includes compacting the device into a compressed form
for introduction.

14-15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein the device
includes a liquid or gel which solidifies following the insertion of the device.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein the device
includes a hydrogel or elastomer.

18. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the device occludes the defect
while allowing compression and distraction of the disc with respect to normal spinal movement.

19-23. (Canceled)